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ABSTRACT

As schools focus on improvement, a key to sustaining reform is active and effective leadership. This multimedia package (a booklet and two audiotapes) provides a general overview of the central issues related to the crisis in school leadership and offers solution options to policymakers. The booklet, "School Leadership in the 21st Century: Why and How It Is Important" (Susan Gates, Karen Ross, and Dominic Brewer), begins with a comprehensive definition of "school leadership." It continues with a discussion of why people should care about leadership and summarizes what is known about how good leaders influence schools and students. The next section looks at the people who hold positions of school leadership and examines the difficulties potential school principals face. The next section discusses the job of the school leader, how it has changed, and how those changes reduce the attractiveness of leadership positions. The final section suggests ways that policymakers might deal with the leadership crisis from the perspectives of teacher preparation, leader recruitment, and job redefinitions. The booklet contains 19 references. Tape 1, interviews with national experts and practitioners, explores the new principalship and the difficulties some districts face in finding and training qualified principals. Tape 2 continues to explore issues of quality and quantity with another panel of experts. (WFA)

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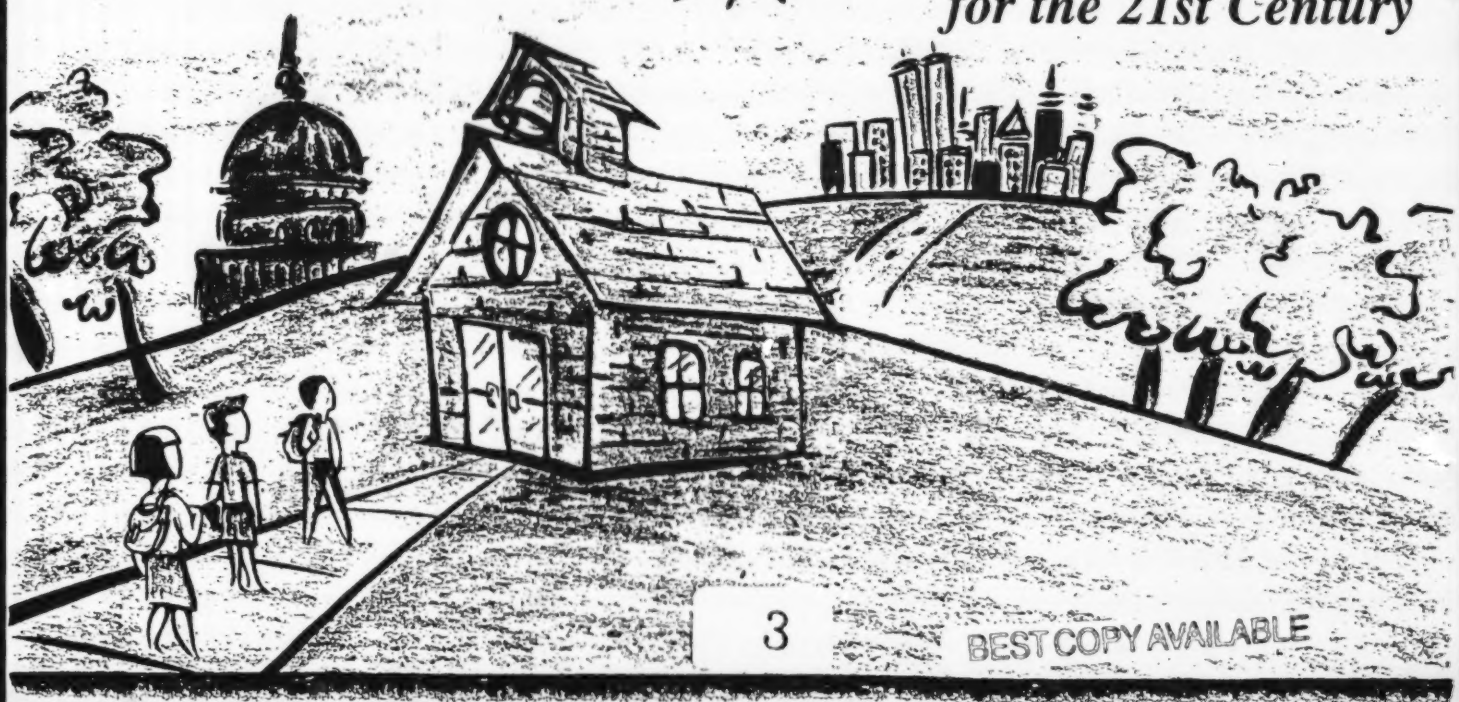
NCREL School Development Outreach Project

Leading to Reform:

Educational Leadership for the 21st Century



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As schools focus on improvement, a key to sustaining reform is active and effective leadership. This multimedia package addresses questions such as What components foster strong school leadership? and How do we reconcile the need for greater leadership in a climate where few are willing to accept those responsibilities?

Tape One

This tape explores the "new principalship" and the difficulties some districts face in finding and training qualified principals. The tape features interviews with national experts and practitioners, including:

Darlene Merry, director of staff development, Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools

Michael Usdan, president, Institute for Educational Leadership

Nancy Protheroe, researcher, Education Research Service

Joseph Murphy, president of the Ohio Principals Academy and chair of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

Louis Martinez, community superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools

Mary Elizabeth Lacy, consultant to principal-interns, Montgomery County Public Schools

Gayle Mollet, principal intern, Resnik Elementary School, Montgomery County Public Schools

David Kahn, high school history resource teacher, Montgomery County Public Schools

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Tape Two

This tape continues exploring issues of quality and quantity. Featured guests include:

Howard Fuller, former superintendent, Milwaukee Public Schools, and currently the director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning, Marquette University

Deborah McGriff, former superintendent, Detroit Public Schools, and currently president of Edison Colleges

Deborah Meier, head of the Mission Hill School, Boston, and former head of the Central Park East School in Harlem

Mary Beth Blegen, former teacher in residence at the U.S. Department of Education

Roland Barth, Principals' Center, Harvard University

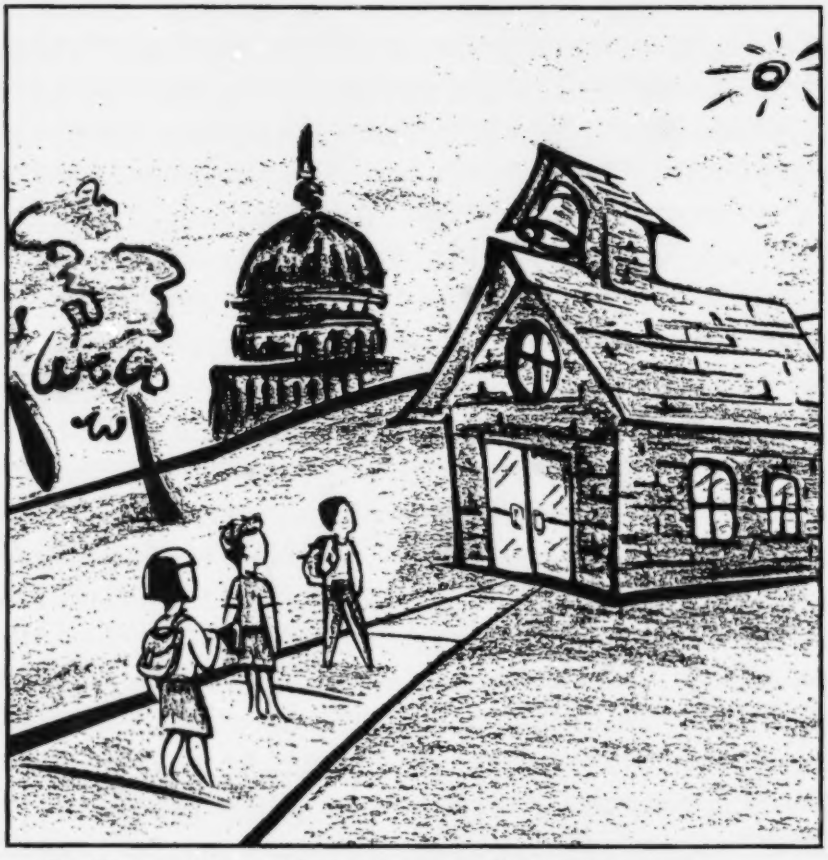
Gordon Calweiti, former superintendent, Tulsa Public Schools; executive director, ASCD; and currently senior researcher at the Education Research Service

Lamar Whitmore, principal of Flower Hill School, Montgomery County Public Schools

Ellie DeYoung, principal on special assignment, Elementary Administrative Training Program, Montgomery County Public Schools

School Development Outreach Project

School Leadership in the 21st Century: *Why and How it Is Important*



By Susan Gates, Karen Ross, and Dominic Brewer

Developed by:

NCREL

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Introduction and Overview: School Leadership

This booklet and accompanying audio journal series provide a general overview of the central issues related to the crisis in school leadership, and they offer several options for policymakers to address this crisis. These options include introducing programs to improve the preparation of leaders, developing new recruitment strategies, and redefining the role of school leaders.

The Booklet

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The authors define what they mean by the term "school leadership."

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The authors address the issue of why we should care about school leadership and summarize what we know about how good leaders influence schools and students. The authors identify four skills of an effective leader, based on a recent forum of the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking and Management: (1) instructional leadership; (2) management; (3) communication, collaboration, and community building; and (4) vision development, risk taking, and change management.

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Leading to Results: Educational Leadership for the 21st Century

The two-part program explores what it takes and what it means to be an effective principal. The featured experts explain that leadership skills are needed not only to manage a school and coordinate a variety of activities, but also to support engaged learning and to encourage human creativity and interaction to flourish.

Your hosts:

Ed Janus, executive producer,
Corporate Radio Network

Marianne Kroeger, director,
Office of Information and Outreach, NCREL

Featured experts include:

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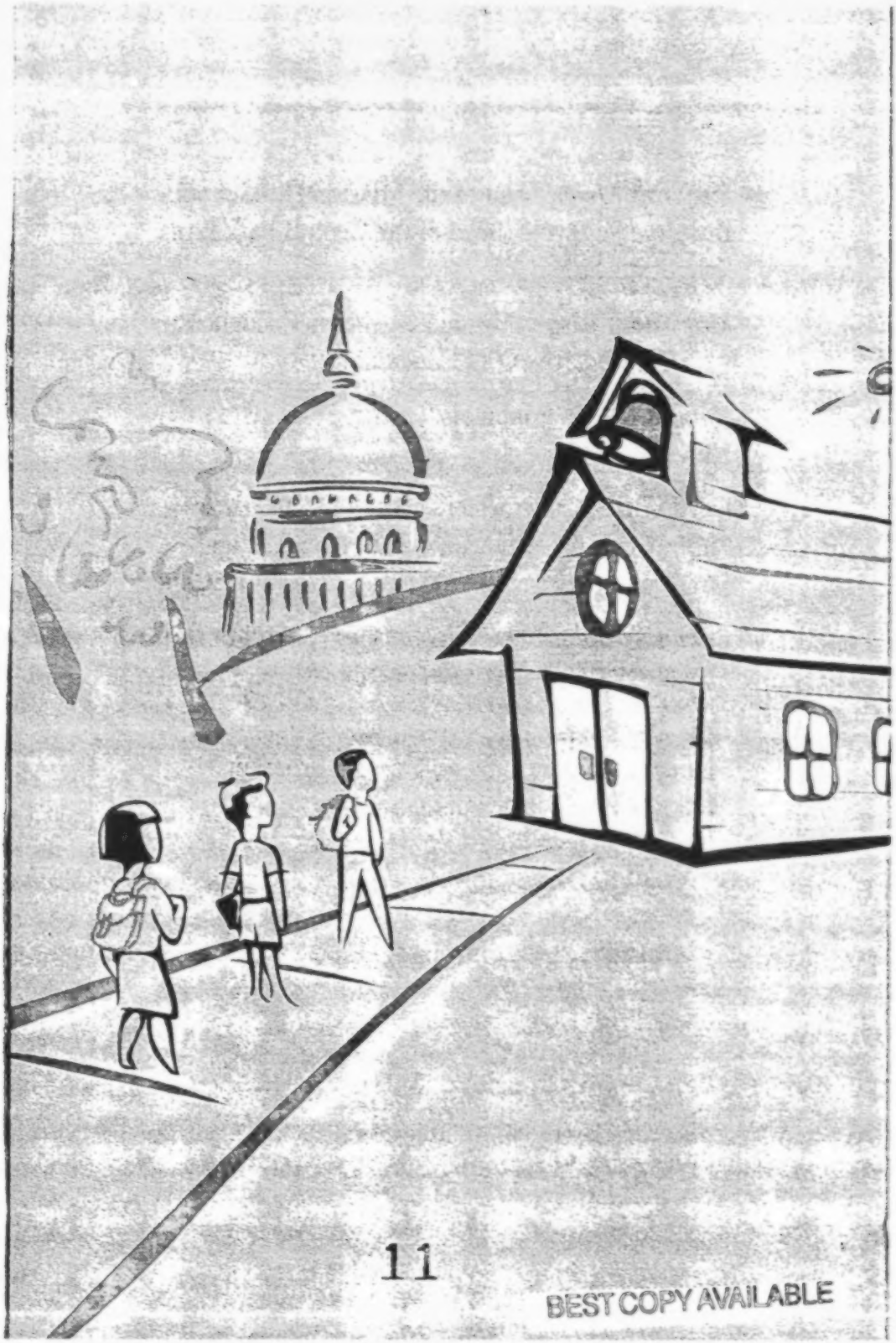

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School Leadership in the 21st Century: Why and How it Is Important

By Susan Gates, Karen Ross, and Dominic Brewer

Introduction

School leadership has become a much-talked-about topic recently, fueled by a long-standing concern over the quality of primary and secondary education in our country. Multiple stakeholders (i.e., educators, parents, students, policymakers, social service agencies, and community organizations) are becoming increasingly interested or invested in the quality of our public schools. It is not surprising, therefore, that the public debate on school quality is focusing much more attention on school leadership. Several major foundations have announced new programs of action and research designed to address a host of issues related to school leadership, governance, and management. Training programs for school leaders have been in existence at many levels, but new and innovative programs are being established, and some states have incorporated standards-based assessments into the licensure process for principals.

The issue has also captured the attention of the federal government, and Congress is considering support for several leadership programs such as:

- The School Leadership Initiative, which would allocate $40 million to establish regional centers to deliver professional development training for principals, particularly those working in high-poverty, low-performing schools. The program could eventually provide much-needed training for 10,000 school leaders.
- The LEAD (Leadership Education and Development) Program, which would authorize $100 million in grants to help states and agencies provide leadership education, recruitment, and mentoring programs for principals and other school leaders (National Association of Elementary School Principals & National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1998).

The term "school leadership" is difficult to define. On one hand, it is a career with defined roles and responsibilities. From this perspective, school leaders (i.e., principals, assistant principals, lead teachers) are those charged to make decisions about how a school operates and meets expectations. These decisions range from administering high-level and strategic programmatic plans—such as choosing a curriculum framework and delineating a primary pedagogical approach to be used throughout the school—to handling more administrative and operational issues such as determining the school bus schedule. Leaders are also held accountable for school performance on multiple dimensions including student performance on standardized tests, attendance, school safety, and graduation rates. School leaders are responsible to many

stakeholders (parents, the school board, students, and the district, state, and federal governments) and are expected to balance their many, often-conflicting demands, while always maintaining student learning as the central focus.

One reason school leadership is a particularly important issue is that many of the current school reform initiatives, in order to be successful, require active leadership support and participation. Some reform efforts—such as voucher programs, charter schools, and site-based management—are predicated on a view that strong and appropriate school leadership matters. The challenge is that often, good leaders are inhibited by the many rules, regulations, and restrictions imposed at the district, state, and federal level. Designers of some reform models believe that if school leaders are liberated from these traditional constraints, they will be free to provide good leadership and help schools succeed.

Good Schools Need Good Leaders

School leadership is important to the success of a school or school system. Over 15 years ago, the effective schools research (Purkey & Smith, 1983) documented that in schools where students performed better than expected based on poverty and other demographic characteristics, a "dynamic" principal was at the helm. In more recent years, strong leaders remain key to turning around poorly performing schools, implementing reforms, and motivating teachers and students in districts such as Memphis, Tennessee; El Paso, Texas; and Long Beach, New York.

Although it is difficult to demonstrate a direct link between school leadership and student achievement (the most tangible and publicly accepted measure of school success), a model of what makes a good leader is emerging. A recent forum of the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management (1999) developed a comprehensive description of an effective school leader. Consistent with the observation that the job of a school leader is multidimensional, the forum identified areas in which school leaders must have skills: (1) instructional leadership; (2) management; (3) communication, collaboration, and community building; and (4) vision development, risk taking, and change management. We devote the next section of this paper to describing these skill sets. Keep in mind that there is still much discussion and debate about which characteristics are intrinsic requirements or can be externally identified and capitalized upon.

Instructional Leadership

Many reformers identify one of the most important characteristic of an effective school leader as the ability to provide strong instructional leadership. Instructional leadership includes the design of instructional strategies, supervision and evaluation of programs, and the development of curriculum and graduation requirements (see Murphy, 1988, for a review of research in this area). Thus, principals must have a deep understanding of the processes of teaching and learning including knowledge of new teaching methods, student construction of knowledge, and skills in problem solving. In addition, good leaders must devote a large portion of their

time and energy to improving teaching and learning.

Recent research suggests that particular tasks are characteristic of instructional leaders: those related to school performance, such as making regular classroom visits, communicating instructional goals, and promoting discussion of instructional issues (Heck, 1992). Effective principals also pay considerable attention to indicators of student achievement. Good instructional leaders are committed to success for all students and place particular emphasis on improving instruction for students who are performing below average. These principals are skilled observers of instruction and are able to give valuable feedback in ways that encourage and motivate teachers to improve their practice. They create a schoolwide dialogue around models of good teaching and quality student work, and everyone is held accountable for student performance.

Good instructional leaders are committed to success for all students and place particular emphasis on improving instruction for students who are performing below average.

Instructional leadership looks different in different districts. Principals may take on varying levels of direct involvement in classrooms and other instructional activities. Some may spend considerable time in classrooms, while others may create teams of teachers or teacher-leaders to carryout their goals for instructional improvement. The key elements of good instructional leadership are an ability to provide informed feedback, guidance, support, and professional development activities.

Management

There is little debate about the fact that good leaders must also be good managers. They must know about finance and be able to navigate successfully through difficult political waters filled with competing interests and demands for resources. In addition, good leaders must be adept at managing people (teachers and other staff, and stakeholders), time, and facilities.

Management issues have become particularly important in today's climate of educational reform. There is an intense debate within the education community regarding whether school leadership is primarily an administrative function (managing money, parents, teachers, and so on) or an instructional leadership function (Olson, 2000a). On the one hand, current education reform initiatives place principals in the position of being judged by their success in raising test scores and meeting performance goals, while on the other hand, changes in school governance force principals to take

greater responsibility for staffing, budgeting, and other managerial tasks. Questions arise as to which of these competing demands should take priority. In which of these areas do principals really need to be leaders?

Communication, Collaboration, and Community Building

While administrator training typically focuses on budgeting and resource management, today's leaders need skills in communication, collaboration, and community building. Approaches to school leadership are shifting from the traditional top-down command and control process to one where responsibilities are shared among teachers, students, parents, the community, and educational leaders. Rather than telling people what to do, effective leaders rally people around a meaningful vision and clear goals and motivate them to work hard to achieve them. But again, the usefulness of different leadership styles often depends on the context of the school or district. For example, in New York City's Community District #2, a more direct leadership style has worked well, resulting in improved student outcomes and heightened respect for teachers and district leadership. Such direct leadership is often promoted as the necessary first step in districts where there are significant challenges and barriers to change. Particularly in these difficult settings, principals (and superintendents) must possess the following value-added skills: political savvy to develop a lasting base of support for educational reform, expertise in managing the media, and capacity for developing a good relationship with the school board.

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Much of the concern about school leadership stems from (1) a clearer understanding of how leadership can make a difference in schools and districts failing to meet the needs of their students and (2) a belief that there is an impending shortage of qualified people to fill school leadership positions.

Unfortunately, research provides no clear recommendation on the best strategy for leaders to use in their relations with teachers (Manasse, 1985) and others within the school community. Both directive leaders (those employing an aggressive management strategy) and facilitative leaders (who emphasize consultation) have been found to be effective. However, good leaders promote the involvement of teachers and parents in the decision-making process. Excellent principals are not threatened by this empowerment. Good leadership, therefore, appears to be more than hierarchical leadership.

Vision Development, Risk Taking, and Change Management

Consistent with the effective schools literature, good leaders must have a vision for their school, a plan for getting there, and an ability to communicate

that vision effectively. Additionally, they must understand how to accomplish school change by challenging deeply entrenched behaviors and beliefs and by encouraging all members of the school-community to take risks. A recent study of highly effective schools in New York City (Teske & Schneider, 1999) suggests that within these schools, there is a culture defined and sustained by a combination of strong, consistent leadership and strong community support. Although the specific mission of a school and pedagogical approaches may vary, effective schools have a clearly articulated vision. This vision permeates all aspects of school culture with consistency, clarity, and stability. Principals in these effective New York schools also have many of the characteristics of entrepreneurs: they take risks, seize opportunities, and work to establish a cohesive, likeminded network of parents, teachers, and staff.

Is There a Shortage of Effective School Leaders?

Much of the concern about school leadership stems from (1) a clearer understanding of how leadership can make a difference in schools and districts failing to meet the needs of their students and (2) a belief that there is an impending shortage of qualified people to fill school leadership positions. Daniel Curry, superintendent of Woods County Schools, West Virginia (Olson, 2000b), recommends taking a long, hard look at the job: "Long term, I think we really need to look at the job itself. There are demands on principals that didn't exist before. We may have to rethink the whole role of the principal and perhaps provide some additional help."

Adding to the concern is the 1998 report from the National Association of Elementary School Principals and National Association of Secondary School Principals, which describes a lack of diversity in the principal candidate pool. As the nation's student population becomes more ethnically diverse, its principal population may need to follow suit. Therefore, we ask: What does a typical school leader look like and what is the basis for concern about a shortage of school leaders in the future?

Today's Leaders

Based on a 1998 survey of elementary and middle school principals (Doud & Keller, 1998) we have a good picture of our current school leaders. The typical principal is 50 years old, has 25 years of experience as an educator, and has held this position for 11 years—6 of them in the current school. He (a majority of principals are male) supervises 30 professional staff and 14 support staff but does not have the help of an assistant principal. Although he is the manager of the school, he has control over only 26 pecent of the school's budget. Currently, 16 percent of all principals are minorities. Only 12 percent of principals at the secondary level are minorities. The typical principal works ten hours a day and spends an additional eight hours per week on school-related activities. The average salary of elementary school principals for the 1999-2000 school year is $69,407 (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2000a). Their assistants make on average $56,419. At the middle school level, these figures increase to $73,877; $60,842 for assistants. Doud and Keller

(1998) have found that salaries are higher in larger schools and are influenced by the principal's experience and education. Salaries are also higher in urban areas.

A survey of principals from the 1993-1994 school year (Fiore & Curtin, 1997) suggests that secondary school principals differ from elementary and middle school principals in important ways: First, they are more highly paid. The average salary of secondary school principals is approximately 5 percent higher than that of middle school principals. Second, female principals are less likely to be found in secondary schools. Whereas one-third of all public school principals are female, only 14 percent occupy this position at the secondary level. Further, both women and minority principals are more prevalent in large districts in either central cities or urban fringes.

The Looming Leadership Shortage

There is increasing concern that there is (or soon will be) a shortage of people willing to fill positions of leadership in schools. This concern results from three problems. One, many potential school leaders are deterred from entering the field because of the perception that the demands of the job are impossible to meet. Heightened district and public demand to improve standards and student performance appear to be negatively affecting interest in the principalship. Two, the current turnover rate in the principalship would seem to indicate that there is some truth to this perception. Third, a boom in teacher and other school personnel retirements reflect the hiring frenzy of the 1960s.

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Of the principals surveyed by Doud and Keller in 1998, two-thirds expressed concern over public education's ability to attract quality people to the principalship in the future. Another recent study conducted by the National Association for Elementary School Principals and the National Association for Secondary School Principals (1988) provides support for these fears. The study found that half of the superintendents who had recently filled principal vacancies felt there was a shortage of qualified candidates.

The study also identified several factors that superintendents believe are discouraging potential principals from applying for the position. By far the most commonly cited factor was that the compensation is not sufficient given the demands of the job (60 percent gave this as a primary reason). Most states and districts require public school administrators to have several years of teaching experience and complete a certification process that involves coursework at an accredited university. There is competing evidence about the value of this process in preparing aspiring leaders for their jobs.

As suggested in the taped interviews in this packet, some anecdotal evidence suggests that the hassle of obtaining certification requirements and the modest pay increase to become a principal deter good teachers from moving into management positions. Teachers pursing an administrative certificate are typically required to attend courses toward certification on their own time and to pay for these courses themselves.

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A further problem is that many teachers who have already gone to the trouble of obtaining an administrative credential choose to remain in the classroom rather than assume a leadership position. The taped interviews reveal that teachers are deterred by the long hours required by these leadership positions and turned off by the administrative activities leadership positions require.

If teachers are deterred from moving into leadership positions, then where will we find new leaders? Nonteachers who might have an interest in pursuing a career as a principal or who might like to assume such a position for a few years face even greater barriers in that they must gain at least a few years of teaching experience, which would likely require them to obtain some form of teacher certification in addition to the administrative certification. If, as noted earlier, the level of compensation in school administration is insufficient to entice teachers to enter the principalship, it seems that it would be even more difficult to recruit from other professions, particularly those that are more highly paid. These factors, linked together, signal school leadership shortages in the future. Heightened demands, high turnover rates, insufficient pay, and cumbersome and costly application prerequisites all appear to effectively shrink the pool of potential leadership candidates.

Districts, schools, administrators, and, in some cases, teachers are being rewarded or punished explicitly on the basis of the outcomes of the students for whom they are responsible

Changes in the Job Description

The characteristics of a good school leader, as well as the job itself, have changed dramatically in the past ten years. This theme is reflected in several of the taped interviews. First, education reform places a strong emphasis on "accountability." This trend inevitably focuses attention on those who manage school systems—those formally charged with producing the outcomes. Districts, schools, administrators, and, in some cases, teachers are being rewarded or punished explicitly on the basis of the outcomes of the students for whom they are responsible (for example, in Kentucky, South Carolina, and Dallas). In some cases, accountability requirements are written into state law. In other cases, individual districts contract with either superintendents or principals on student perform-

ance outcomes. To balance the high expectations for improved student outcomes, some states give school-based leaders more autonomy over budgets and decision making. Nevertheless, it is arguable as to whether school-level leaders have the necessary tools or support to effect significant change. As the taped interviews emphasize, today's leaders need to be able to define and clearly understand what they will be held accountable for and then be able to collect relevant data to demonstrate their performance.

Second, there is a strong emphasis on comprehensive and model-based reform. There is also continuing frustration over the ability of public schools to successfully adopt and implement reforms of curricula, teaching practice, and resource allocation on a wide and sustainable basis. A common theme of many studies (Berends, Kirby, Naftel, & McKelvey, 1999) is that both district and school leadership is critical for success.

Third, as noted earlier, the changing demographics of the students and the limited diversity in teacher populations have several implications for the future of school leadership. Two recent trends include a rapidly growing student population, especially at the secondary level, and an increasingly diverse student body. Unless drastic changes occur immediately, as the student body becomes more diverse we will see a further mismatch in the characteristics of students and their school administrators.

Given these changing demographics, education stakeholders are concerned that the current candidate supply has not been

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properly prepared and therefore does not possess the skills necessary to be effective administrators in today's climate of education reform. One of the biggest challenges facing the nation, therefore, is how to attract, train, and retain the best and brightest in both teaching and leadership positions, and to ensure they reflect the skills necessary to meet the needs of the diversity of the students they will oversee. Providing the market and bureaucratic incentives to make this happen is no easy task in the context of a strong labor market for all workers and the constraints on the way schools operate due to tenure and certification rules. Concern is growing that traditional school administration and leadership preparation programs are not up to the task.

Policy Options for the Future of School Leadership

What can policymakers do to begin to address the challenges presented in this booklet? The education community has generated countless strategies on how to improve both the job of school leaders and the qualifications of the people filling those jobs. Their suggestions include introducing creative and innovative programs to improve the preparation of leaders, developing new strategies for recruiting "the best and brightest" to lead schools in the future, and redefining the role of school leaders. It is important to note that the strategies discussed below are recent innovations that have been attempted by some schools, districts, or universities. However, many of the suggestions encounter criticism as well as praise. There is no general consensus at this time as to the best solution to the leadership dilemma.

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Change the Way We Select and Prepare Tomorrow's Leaders

As mentioned earlier, school leadership is a multidimensional job. One of the major criticisms of current preparation programs for administrators is that they emphasize management rather than instructional and school improvement issues. Further, preparation often fails to expose students to the realities of the job. Changes can be made in the way school leaders are selected and prepared by:

- **Integrating traditional preparation with hands-on experience.** More realistic preparation programs, where principal candidates would spend much of their time in real school settings, is being increasingly advocated. Learning would result from exposure to real problems and challenges, and from interactions with good leaders. One promising approach is to allow mixed teams of teachers and administrators to work together on problems, developing techniques of shared leadership or integrating fieldwork into regular classroom-based learning.
- **Growing your own leaders.** Given potential shortages in the supply of principals and the unwillingness of some teachers to participate in traditional preparation programs on their own time and at their own expense, some districts have assumed the task of "growing their own leaders" through internally sponsored development programs. Several of the tape interviewees were participating in such programs in

their districts and others mentioned that even outside such programs, a large part of learning comes on the job through good mentors. These programs require districts to identify potential leaders within the district and to provide them with structured opportunities to develop the skills required to become effective administrators. Slightly more than one-quarter of school districts currently have an aspiring principals program designed to recruit and prepare candidates from among current staff (Fiore & Curtin, 1997). Some "grow your own" programs are supported by universities and professional associations. For example, Michigan State University and the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals have collaborated to form the Emerging Principals Program, which works with school districts to identify candidates for the principalship and then pays the related expenses for program participants.

- **Developing standards for administrators.** Another step toward improving the quality of future leaders is developing new standards and assessments, along with changing administrator licensure requirements. The intention of such standards is two-fold: to ensure that administrators are of high-quality and possess the skills required for the position and to induce the certification programs to address the skill areas that the licensing agency deems are important. In 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which is organized by the

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Council of Chief State School Officers, developed a set of standards focused on teaching, learning, and the creation of powerful learning environments (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). The standards include several skills and qualities required for successful leadership by people at all levels of administration, including types of knowledge, dispositions, and performance. ISLLC argues for standards on the grounds that they "present a common core of knowledge, dispositions, and performances that will help link leadership more forcefully to productive schools and enhanced educational outcomes."

In addition, ISLLC has partnered with the Educational Testing Service to develop assessments that are linked to the standards. Six states (Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, and North Carolina) currently use the School Leaders Licensure Assessment as part of their licensure process for principals. There is also a corresponding test for superintendents (the School Superintendent Assessment) that will be administered for the first time in the fall of 2000. Currently it is only required in the state of Missouri.

Redefine Leadership Roles

Given our need for qualified and committed people to fill school leadership positions, how do we recruit, train, and support those individuals filling these roles? Proposed solu-

tions to the problems discussed earlier focus on creative and innovative ways to restructure leadership positions so that they can be filled by committed, qualified people who view their job as challenging but manageable. As the executive director of the Pew Forum on Standards-Based Reform, S. Paul Reville argues, "It's going to require new systems, and new approaches, and new organizations, and new ways of distributing the leadership function" (Olson, 2000a). These solutions include:

- **Reducing bureaucracy.** One essential step in redefining the roles of school administrators, particularly principals, is reducing bureaucratic responsibilities. Two major benefits result from this step:
  - By reducing the demands of the position and changing expectations, the position may become more attractive to potential leaders.
  - Reducing the bureaucracy will improve the performance of principals by actually allowing them to lead.

  Several researchers have focused on the importance of increasing the capacity of leaders to do the job through increased flexibility and autonomy. For example, the main conclusion of Teske and Schneider (1999) from their study of effective schools is that autonomy is key to effective leadership. They argue that the current bureaucracy is excessive, constraining the effectiveness of school

leaders. Important components of this autonomy include control over the school budget and control over selecting and retaining staff. Control over staff has the potential to set the tone of the entire school because teachers who share the principal's vision do not need to be monitored as closely, thus allowing the principal time for other tasks.

Autonomy must be granted within a framework of accountability, such as charter schools or state or district standards. The standards movement (in Kentucky and Washington state, for example), as well as the movement toward school-based management, reflect the idea of setting goals for schools and holding principals accountable for outcomes, but providing them with the freedom and flexibility to accomplish goals in ways they feel are most effective for their particular school. A key issue here is that if you are going to hold an individual accountable, you must also provide that person with the capacity to do the job.

- **Splitting the job.** As mentioned at several points in the taped interviews, it may be too much to expect a single person to provide both instructional leadership and administrative leadership. In a recent *Education Week* article (Olson, 2000a), Michael Usdan of the Institute for Education Leadership suggested that each school have two leaders: one to handle the instructional aspects of the job and another to deal

with the management side. We see an example of this in a San Diego school district where superintendent Alan Bersin, a lawyer, hired experienced New York educator Anthony Alvarado to work with him. Many observers are interested to see how this team approach will function.

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this article, school leadership has become an important topic recently. The public is concerned about the quality of our schools, and there seems to be a relationship between good leaders and good schools. While good leaders may have different styles and adopt different approaches to their job, it is clear that they understand and/or exhibit strong instructional leadership; practice good management, communication, collaboration, and community building skills; are able to develop and communicate a sound vision for the school; and are willing to take thoughtful, data-driven risks and manage change. As noted at many points in the taped interviews, the job of school leaders has changed dramatically in recent years, in part due to the emphasis of current education reforms and high-stakes accountability. In particular, school leaders are being asked more stringently to demonstrate and be held accountable for school performance.

Just as the focus on the importance of school leaders is increasing, interest in and incentives for taking on leadership positions appear to be waning. Policymakers need to

define where they can influence the process for attracting more qualified people into these important leadership positions and empowering them to be good leaders. Leverage points might include setting criteria for and funding better pay for current teachers to move into administration or clearer opportunities and incentives for people from outside the teaching field to be eligible for school leadership positions; setting performance standards for the position that reduce the administrative burden on leaders; and/or modifying the university-based certification and training requirements to reflect the changing nature of the job.

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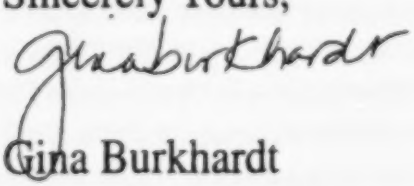

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